NCHS Data on Child Health

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.
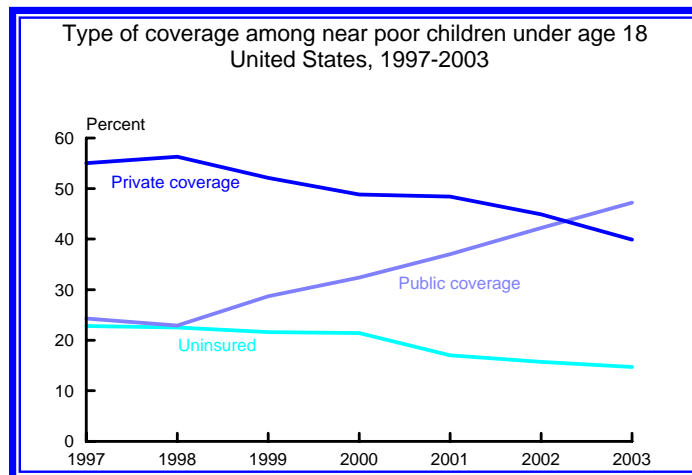
Child Health

Children in poor and near poor families were more likely to be uninsured, to have unmet medical needs, delayed medical care, no usual place of health care, and high use of emergency room services than children in families who were not poor.

Health Insurance

Although a large majority of children under 18 have private insurance, the percentage of those with public insurance is steadily rising while the percentage of those with private coverage is declining.

- An increasing number of American children under 18 have **health insurance coverage**. The percent of children without insurance decreased from 12.7 percent in 1998 to 10.1 percent in 2003.

- The percent of poor children **without health insurance** decreased from 21.6 percent in 1998 to 15.4 percent in 2003. The percent of near poor children without health insurance coverage decreased from 22.5 percent in 1998 to 14.7 percent in 2003.
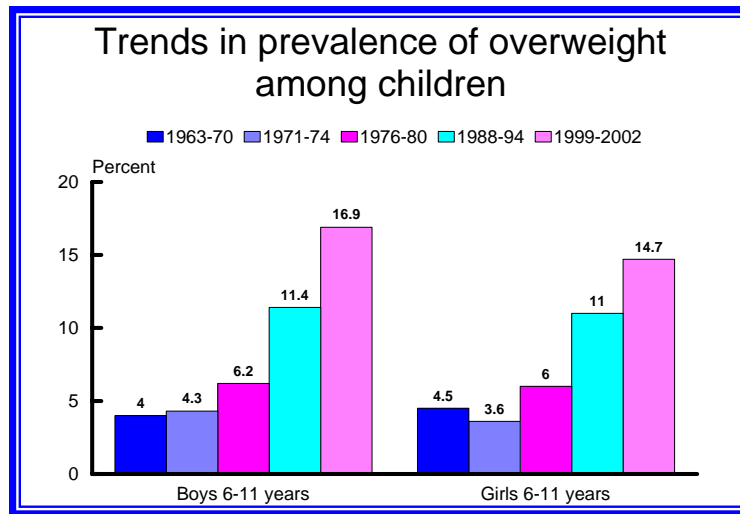

Type of coverage among near poor children under age 18 United States, 1997-2003

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2003

Prevalence of Overweight Children on the Rise

Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey show a significant increase in the prevalence of overweight among children 6-11 years of age since 1963.

- The prevalence of overweight children increased from 4 percent in 1963-1970 to 15.8 percent in 1999-2002.

- The prevalence of overweight among boys increased from 11.6 percent in 1988-1994 to 16.9 percent in 1999-2002. The prevalence among girls increased from 11 percent to 14.7 percent for the same time period.

- The prevalence of overweight non-Hispanic black (19.8 percent) and Mexican American (21.8 percent) children was higher than non-Hispanic white children (13.5 percent) in 1999-2002.

Trends in prevalence of overweight among children

■ 1963-70 ■ 1971-74 ■ 1976-80 ■ 1988-94 ■ 1999-2002

Percent

	Boys 6-11 years	Girls 6-11 years
1963-70	4	4.5
1971-74	4.3	3.6
1976-80	6.2	6
1988-94	11.4	11
1999-2002	16.9	14.7

SOURCE: NHES II & III, NHANES I, II, & III, NHANES 1999-2002;
Ogden et al. JAMA 2002; Hedley et al. JAMA 2004

Other Child Health Facts

- In 2002, the majority of children in the United States were reported to be in excellent health (41 million or 56 percent) and another 20 million children (28 percent) were reported to be in very good health.
- In 2002, 3.9 million children (5 percent) in the United States did not have a usual place of health care.
- In 2002, the leading causes of death for children 5-14 years of age were accidents, followed by cancer, birth defects, homicide and suicide.
- In 2002, almost 2 million children aged 5-11 years (6.4 percent) had unmet dental needs because their families could not afford dental care.

Child Health Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)** – collects information about the health and diet of people in the United States. NHANES is unique in that it combines a home interview with health tests that are conducted in a Mobile Examination Center. NHANES is able to directly measure conditions where there are large race/ethnicity differentials such as diabetes, and to provide reliable information on health conditions regardless of whether the survey respondent is aware of them. (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm)
- **National Vital Statistics System -** collects information from birth and death certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including detailed race/ethnicity characteristics. Because all births and deaths are part of this database, it provides the detail needed for research on differentials. (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm)
- **National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)** – collects information on the nation's health status through confidential household interviews that measure: health status and disability, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations, health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities. The large sample size of the NHIS, combined with detailed categories on race/ethnicity collected, make the NHIS a valuable source of data on differentials. (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm)

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at **http://www.cdc.gov/nchs,** or call at
1-866-441-NCHS